

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8402
INFO AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PEPR, AF
SUBJ: AP CORRESPONDENT REPORTS ON AFGHANISTAN

REF: KABUL 3814

1. TEHRAN JOURNAL MAY 16 EDITION CARRIED UNATTRIBUTED ARTICLE ON EDITORIAL PAGE ENTITLED "BUILDING A NEW AFGHANISTAN". ARTICLE CONTAINS INSET WITH FOLLOWING DESCRIPTION OF AUTHOR: "THE WRITER OF THIS DESPATCH HAS BEEN IN AFGHANISTAN SINCE SHORTLY AFTER THE APRIL 27 MILITARY COUP. DURING HIS STAY HE SPENT 48 HOURS IN CUSTODY AFTER HIS ARREST WHILE INTERVIEWING TWO MOSLEM PRIESTS. HE WAS RELEASED UNHARMED". SINCE DETAILS COINCIDE CLOSELY WITH EXPERIENCE OF AP CORRESPONDENT BARRY SHLACHTER REPORTED REFTEL, WE BELIEVE HIM TO BE AUTHOR OF PIECE.

2. AUTHOR LEADS OFF BY DESCRIBING "IDEALISTIC YOUNG OFFICERS WHO TOOK COMMAND OF THIS TRADITIONALIST MOSLEM COUNTRY" AS WANTING TO BUILD "A SOCIALIST STATE ON AN ISLAMIC FOUNDATION". HE VIVIDLY ILLUSTRATES THE POWER OF THE REGIME'S NEW SECURITY CHIEF AZIZ AHMED AKBARI, A 25
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YEAR OLD FORMER CLERK IN THE KABUL POLICE LOGISTICS SECTION, A YOUNG MAN WHO GIVES "ORDERS TO SUBORDINATES TWICE HIS AGE WHO BOW AS THEY LEAVE HIS OFFICE AT THE INTERIOR MINISTRY". HE QUOTES AKBARI AS SAYING THIRTEEN DAYS AFTER COUP THAT, "WE WANT TO BUILD A SOCIALIST AFGHANISTAN, A MARXIST-LENINIST AFGHANISTAN". ACCORDING TO AUTHOR, AKBARI SHOWED "NO RELUCTANCE IN VOICING WHAT HE SAYS ARE AIMS OF

THE COUP" AND "WAS OBLIVIOUS TO THE TWO MEN IN THE ROOM WHO APPEARED UNEASY BY THE SUDDEN DISCLOSURE TO A FOREIGNER..". AKBARI, WHO SEEMS TO BE PARTICULARLY LOQUACIOUS INFORMANT, ALSO TOLD AUTHOR THAT ONLY A HANDFUL OF POLICE OFFICERS, MANY OF WHOM HE HELPED RECRUIT, JOINED THE KHALQ PARTY. AS A RESULT POLICE ARE NOT TRUSTED BY THE MILITARY AND POLICE STATIONS AROUND THE COUNTRY ARE GUARDED BY TROOPS.

3. DESCRIPTION OF AUTHOR'S ARREST CLOSELY FOLLOWS SCENARIO OUTLINED REFTEL AND INCLUDES QUOTES FROM VARIOUS ARMY OFFICERS INVOLVED IN HIS DETENTION. ONE ARMY LIEUTENANT INADVERTENTLY POINTS UP ANOMALY BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY IN AFGHANISTAN WHEN HE SAYS" WOMEN SHOULD BE TREATED EQUAL TO MEN BUT SHOULD STILL WEAR VEILS. THAT IS WHAT THE ISLAMIC RELIGION SAYS". ANOTHER MILITARY CONTACT TOLD HIM THAT "IT WAS DANGEROUS BEING A KHALQ MEMBER DURING THE DAOUD REGIME. WE MET IN DARK CINEMA HALLS AND PASSED ALONG PARTY INSTRUCTIONS BY SLIPPING NOTES INTO OUR COMRADES POCKETS".

4. COMMENT: WE ARE TOLD SHLACHTER REMAINS IN KABUL. SINCE IT IS UNATTRIBUTED, ARTICLE MIGHT HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT BY TEHRAN JOURNAL REPORTER JAHAN-SHALI, WHO JUST RETURNED FROM KABUL AND WHOSE INTERVIEW WITH TARAKI (SEPTTEL) APPEARED SAME ISSUE. POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF YOUNG MILITARY OFFICERS, AS REPORTED BY SHLACHTER, DIFFERS SIGNIFICANTLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FROM PUBLIC IMAGE BEING PROJECTED BY PRIME MINISTER TARAKI-- PARTICULARLY THE LATTER'S PROTESTATIONS THAT THE NW AFGHAN REGIME SHOULD IN NO WAY BE CONSIDERED COMMUNIST OR PRO-SOVIET.

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